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The principles of religious  
education.



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THE PRINCIPLES  
OF  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Three Sermons

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

BY

COSMO GORDON LANG, D.D.

BISHOP OF STEPNEY

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

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THE following sermons were preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on three of the Sunday afternoons of February 1906. They are now published at the request of many persons, chiefly laymen, who either heard them or read the reports of them which appeared in "The Guardian" and "Church Times." They were not written, but spoken from notes; and I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to the editors of these journals for the use of their excellent reports.

C. G. STEPNEY.

AMEN COURT, ST. PAUL'S:  
*March 20, 1906.*



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# THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## I.—SIMPLE CHRISTIAN TEACHING.<sup>1</sup>

“Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.”—ST. JUDE 3 (Revised Version).

To find some clear and consistent principle which shall regulate the religious teaching of the children of our country is at the present time a duty laid upon every earnest and thoughtful Christian citizen. However conscious we may be of the difficulties which beset the task, however weary we may be of the strife of tongues, we must do our best to fulfil it. Certainly it is a subject of the most vital moment.

National well-being depends upon national character, and character ultimately upon religion. A man's religion is the power that determines for him the attitude in which he stands towards all the supreme relationships of his life—towards the world, towards himself, towards his fellows, towards God. It determines whether or not he looks upon the world as an opportunity for play or pleasure, or as a stage in an immortal destiny; whether he looks upon himself as a sovereign entitled to all his desires, or as a servant of God-given ideals; whether he looks upon God as an unknown force, or as a Supreme Person in Whom he lives and moves and has his being. If there be any truth about questions so momentous as these, then it is of the highest importance that every single life should come into

<sup>1</sup> A sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, February 11, 1906.

contact with that truth, and be moulded and trained in conformity with it. Thus the question, What is to be the religious teaching in the schools of the country? involves a momentous issue, and claims the earnest thought of every Christian and citizen. I propose, God willing, to make it our subject on this and the two following Sunday afternoons.

You will not expect—you would rightly resent—that the treatment of that subject in this place should be in the ordinary sense of the word political. It is the business of the Church to state principles, not to frame an Act of Parliament. We know that the present Government intends to introduce such an Act: we trust that it realises the greatness of its opportunity. In intellectual ability, I believe in sincere desire, certainly in the Parliamentary power which it commands, it has the means of settling the question on sound and stable lines. We pray that it may rise to its opportunity in a large, just, and statesmanlike spirit. Meanwhile, it is our duty to be clear as to our own principles; when the Bill is produced it will be our duty to see how far it either repudiates or acknowledges them. We shall not even maintain any exclusive ecclesiastical interests; for what we shall claim for our own Church of England we shall claim for every other religious body. Our sincere desire is that clearness of principle may help to take bitterness out of controversy. For in this subject

we are as on a darkling plain,  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Only the light of some consistent principle can distinguish friends from foes, and bring order into the confusion with which misunderstanding, prejudice, and political complications have involved the real issues. If we can succeed in discovering some such principle, then it will affect the place of religion, not only in our schools, but also in our own homes and in our hearts. We can, surely, in a matter which touches so closely the deepest issues of national and personal life, dare to invoke the aid of the Divine Teacher, the Spirit of God: "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire."

When we enter upon this inquiry we are at once confronted by a principle which seems to hold the ground and to command widespread popular support and

sentiment: It is a principle so vague that it is difficult to find for it either name or definition. But for a name we had better use the cumbrous title "Undenominationalism," and for a description we may say that it is a belief that beneath all creeds and formularies, all questions of sacraments or government, distinctive of different Christian bodies, there is a basis of essential or fundamental Christianity, and that the Government of a Christian nation should select this common basis, and teach it in all its schools, and through its own teachers. It is a principle certainly at first sight satisfactory to many minds. It seems indeed almost obvious. We know, thank God, that there are great beliefs which do unite Christians of different denominations. They constitute a bond of real spiritual union and an incentive to common action of priceless value. When we are wearied with controversy on points over which Christians differ we turn with eagerness to those points on which, after all, they seem to agree. Why, then, we ask, cannot this common element be selected by the State, and taught to its children, leaving it to the various denominations to use, if they will, other means at other times of supplementing it with their own specific practices and doctrines? Is not this a principle which has been already tried in many schools of the country? and if it is defective in theory, does it not seem to work well in practice? And thus it appeals to the practical instincts of the average Englishman. It commends itself moreover to that vagueness of mind and indifference to definite doctrine which mark the modern spirit. Even to the religious man it seems to breathe something of what we all so passionately long for—the spirit of Christian unity.

Yet, when we examine this principle, plausible as it seems—when we attempt to dig beneath its surface—we find after all that, so far from being an adequate foundation for religious teaching, it is only a loose and shifting rubble of confusions and difficulties. When it is weighed in the balance of serious thought it is found wanting.

When we cross-examine it, it speaks to us in some such words as these—"Let the Christian teaching in our schools be simple, undogmatic, common to all religious bodies." In order at once to anticipate the issue, we reply that Christian teaching—for only of Christian teaching we can speak to-day—Christian teaching to be simple must be

dogmatic ; if it is dogmatic, it cannot be common ; and, if it cannot be common, no one form of it can without injustice be selected and adopted by the State. May I ask your patient attention while we try to think out this position ? When you remember the importance of the issue, it is a request which I am certain you will grant.

First, then, Christian teaching, after all, to be simple, must be dogmatic. Does this seem to you a hard saying ? If so, it must be because we are so confused about the meaning we put into the word "dogma." In itself a dogma is a judgment, a decision, a statement which must be taken on trust. In this sense the whole teaching of children in every subject must be dogmatic. No matter what the subject of your teaching may be, you must begin at once with statements which the child must accept on trust and can only afterwards either verify or correct by its own thinking. And this is, surely, especially true of the Christian religion ; for the Christian religion claims to present a revelation of God which men's thinking could not have invented and men's thinking cannot in the end compass. It is in that sense, from first to last, something that must be taken on trust ; and the more simple you make the statement of these God-given truths, the more dogmatic it must be. For the simplicity does not remove the dogmatic element. On the contrary, by stripping it of all the difficulties and qualifications which it suggests, all the mysteries into which it passes, it presents us with nothing but the naked truth itself. Take an illustration from the special Lesson of this Septuagesima Sunday read to us this morning, and sung to us this afternoon—the majestic Lesson with which God begins the great teaching-book of all His children : "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That is simple, but it is intensely dogmatic. It does not present the thesis for a debate. It presents the world at the very outset of its religious learning with the dogmas of the personality and the creative power of God.

Similarly, would we wish to deprive any of our children of such a sentence as this—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ? Simple, indeed ! So that it touches our very hearts as we

speak and hear it; yet in itself intensely dogmatic. If there is any meaning in it at all, it involves the dogmas that God is a Person, capable of love; that God has sent forth from His Godhead this Jesus of history; that this Jesus of history is no mere son of God as all men are, but unique, the only Begotten; that on faith in this Jesus depend the issues of life both here and hereafter. Or, once again :—

There is a green hill far away,  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to Heav'n,  
Saved by His precious Blood.

Simple, appealing to the earliest and tenderest of our memories! And yet in itself that verse presents in its most definite form the doctrine of the Atonement. Simplicity, then, does not shut out dogma, but rather expresses it with intense and concentrated force. Thus a great Christian thinker, Dr. Mozley, has said that dogmatic language is only so far child's language—that it puts into words what is above our understanding. And child's language must be dogmatic, else it will be so vague, so meaningless, that it will find no entry into the child's mind or memory. Thus it is plain that, in order to be simple, Christian teaching must be dogmatic.

Secondly, if it is dogmatic, it cannot be common. It is obvious at once that there can be no real community between the teaching that Jesus is the Son of God, which would offend a devout Unitarian, and the teaching that Jesus was the son of Joseph, which would offend a devout orthodox Christian. We have to remember that so real is the dividing power of clear and definite statement of truth that many professing Christians have found it impossible to include the Apostles' Creed in the syllabus of undenominational teaching. But even suppose that we could, by some means, contrive some Catechism which would embrace, let us say, the common elements in the Catechism of the Church of England and of the "Free Churches," are we to acquiesce in the implication that the matters on which we differ are not fundamental to our conception

of Christianity? For example, we believe that the Christian religion means not only a belief in certain theories about God, but the communication by God to man of a supernatural life. And if we believe that God has Himself appointed certain means by which that supernatural life is communicated to man, and sustained within him, then our faith in these means of union, in these sacraments, must be fundamental to our conception of Christianity.

We have taught our children to say—each one—“In my Baptism I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” If these words have any truth in them at all, they must be fundamental to that child’s whole conception of religion. Are we to think that they are matters that can be left for other times and other places than its regular religious instruction? Not so thought that robust and noble-hearted Nonconformist, Dale of Birmingham. He repudiated, indeed, the teaching of our Catechism, but he said, “This, if true, is a truth of immense practical importance in the teaching of children. I have no right to ask men who hold this opinion to be silent about it in the schools if any religious teaching is given at all. If I ask them to be silent they would very properly refuse.” If true, it is a truth which must be the very basis of Christian teaching—determining at once the starting-point and the goal of life, investing it with its highest honour, truest strength, and most solemn responsibility. And if we believe that when our Lord, instituting the Holy Communion, said “This do,” He meant that there we were enabled by His appointment to realise the marvellous truth that “Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him,” can we suppose that this living means of communion with a living Lord is anything but “fundamental” to the Christian faith and life?

“Ah, but,” you say, and perhaps with some impatience, “where there is so much that is common to all Christians, why not teach that common basis in the schools and leave these other points, important as they are, to the religious bodies which hold them, to be taught at other times and by other teachers?” But observe that such a limitation of frontier is itself an act of religious judgment. It is itself a declaration upon the points at issue, because it carries irresistibly with it this implication—that the



real essence of Christianity is apart from its teaching about the Sacraments ; that in comparison these are only supplementary, extras, valuable, no doubt, but still not to be compared with the essence that lies behind. " You are teaching this "—if I may quote the words of the late Dr. Moberly, a singularly clear thinker—" you are teaching this with a force the more irresistible because it is silent and, as it were, automatic. You are teaching a fundamental habit of mind which the pupils whom you mould will never wholly forget."

My brethren, do not we see the result of that attitude of mind even now writ large over the religious life especially of our English Church ? Is it not precisely this habit of mind that accounts for the fact that so few of our men carry into their daily life any vital conviction that at baptism they have been taken into union with Jesus Christ, marked by His Cross, and charged with a tremendous moral responsibility ; that so few of them look upon the Holy Communion as anything more than a pious exercise for special people or special occasions ; and that so few of them have the courage to make open witness to their Christianity as members of the Christian body ? Surely, we cannot believe that any system can be satisfactory which would still further propagate and encourage the attitude of mind that takes all vital force and power of witness out of our public Christian profession.

Thirdly, if undenominational Christianity is not really " common," then the State cannot without injustice adopt it and invest it with special privilege and power. This would be an act of the State by which it would select, endow, equip with special privilege, a particular form or conception of religion regarded as at least unsatisfactory by multitudes of its citizens, and propagate a habit of mind which multitudes of its citizens regard as wrong. Such an act, cover it up as you please, must be inconsistent with the true principles alike of religious teaching and of civic justice.

This position is strengthened by two special considerations : (1) Suppose that the selection of the form of religion which the State undertakes to teach were made not directly by Parliament but by the various local authorities ? Then the decision as to what is or is not " fundamental Christianity " would depend upon the choice of local majorities ; the formula to describe the religious teaching in our schools

would be "Quot concilia, tot religiones." Can those who believe that God has given a revelation to man on which the very life of his soul depends contentedly leave the choice of those portions of it which the children of the nation are to be taught to the shifts and chances of local elections? Can those who regard that revelation with any reverence contemplate with equanimity the possibility of its contents being made test-words in municipal contests? (2) Suppose that the State were to refuse to make any inquiry into the personal beliefs of the teachers to whom it entrusts the teaching of the religion which it selects? It is no extravagant supposition. It is almost a certainty. The principle of "no tests" may be taken as accepted. As a principle of civil government, controlling appointments to a branch of the Civil Service, we need not quarrel with it, however confused and prejudiced the reasons may be by which it has been maintained. But if it be extended to the appointment of teachers of religion, is there any security that, even if the religion taught would be accepted by the majority of Christians, it would not often be taught by teachers who themselves were indifferent about it, only half believed it, or even did not believe it at all? I have too great a trust in the great mass of our teachers to doubt that most of them would teach from a genuine faith. But the risk remains, and may we not say that under new and entirely secular arrangements for the training of teachers it will be an increasing risk? If we were only considering the child's mind, the risk is one which we might be prepared to run. But since we are considering the child's soul, it is the mere risk that matters. What might not be the effect on a child's receptive character of a teaching which spoke of our Lord as if He were a mere character in history, or breathed no tone of reverence in the mention of the name of God?

Thus the principle of undenominationalism, regarded as a true basis of religious teaching, cannot hold the ground, and the State cannot adopt it and teach it without prejudice to the cause of religion and of justice. We must agree equally that the State cannot of itself select the religion of any denomination and make that the basis of its teaching. There was a time when that was possible, centuries ago, but that time has passed and can never return. We are driven, therefore, by the mere process of



our thoughts to the conclusion that to preserve what Mr. Gladstone used to call "the integrity of religious teaching"—that is, that it should be taught as a coherent whole and not in arbitrarily selected fragments, and taught by teachers who have a whole-hearted conviction of the truth of what they teach—that, in order to secure the integrity of religious teaching, the State must entrust it to the religious denominations. In a word, it must call upon the Christian Church to undertake the work which it desires, but which it cannot do.

Does this mean, my brethren, that we ask that the State should concern itself only with secular education—that in the schools of a still professedly Christian country there should be no religious teaching at all? God forbid. Nay, rather the reverse. We ask that the State should be so concerned with the religious teaching of its children that, recognising its own inadequacy for so great a task, it should turn to the religious denominations as the only teachers who can teach religion to its children so as to leave a lasting impression upon their lives. We ask that the State should open its school-doors to these as its own invited religious teachers, and should encourage them in every way, and enable them to teach during the hours within which the school usually assembles, and should permit its own staff to offer themselves for the service of the denominations to which they belong. This is not to turn religion out of the schools, but to make religion lastingly effective within the schools.

That is the plea which we offer. For, after all, let us remember, in conclusion, it was to the Church and not the State that our Lord spoke the words, "Go ye; make disciples; teach all nations." It is to the Church, not to the State, that our Lord has pledged His perpetual presence and the guidance of His Holy Spirit in the fulfilment of that commission; and therefore it is the business of the Church—a business which it cannot delegate to others—to teach the children of the State. And when we speak of the Church, we are only claiming for our Church of England what we would claim alike for every religious body, Non-conformist or Roman Catholic. We only ask the recognition that it is to a spiritual body alone that the power of teaching spiritual truth can be committed. Can we suppose that the way in which we are ever to reach religious

truth is to count the heads of the voters at an election ?—that it is to go about and ask what particular form of religion rouses at any particular moment the least resistance ? That is not to “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.”

I ask you, as we close, to lift your thoughts for a moment to a higher level, and to bring them once again to that noble vision which was given to us from St. John in the Second Lesson of this afternoon. There is one State, and one only, which can teach the fulness of the Christian revelation: It is “that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God,” within whose four-square walls of the faith the children of men can entrench themselves in their battle against the world’s evil, and upon whose apostolic foundations they can plant their feet when they are beset by its difficulties and doubts. As the great city passes down into the earth and mingles with its institutions we lose sight, indeed, of the majestic unity and strength of the vision ; but, at least, it is to this City of God that all the great Christian bodies, whatever their names, look as the source and the authority of the faith which they teach.

II.—BIBLE TEACHING.<sup>1</sup>

Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.—2 TIMOTHY iii. 14, 15.

IN the endeavour to find some clear and consistent principle of religious education we found ourselves at the outset confronted by a principle in possession of the field. It is a principle to which we gave the inconvenient title of "Undenominationalism." It is characteristic of the principle, of its vagueness, its uncertainty, that it continually shifts its ground. Last Sunday it met us with this plausible plea, "Let the State teach in all its schools a simple undogmatic Christianity common to all Christian bodies." But when we tried to examine this plausible plea, we found ourselves compelled to answer it by these statements: that Christian teaching in order to be simple must be dogmatic; that if it is dogmatic it cannot be common; and that if it is not common the State cannot, without violation alike of civic and of religious justice, adopt any particular form of teaching and give it the prestige and power of its own sanction and support; that, on the contrary, religious doctrine can only be taught by the religious bodies which themselves profess it, and that it ought to be taught by them in all the schools on behalf of the State which desires Christian teaching for its children.

This afternoon the same undenominational principle meets us with another plea, and one which even more readily wins popular assent. It is this: "Let us waive these questions of creed, and catechism, and doctrine. Let us remember that there is one book which all Christian

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's Cathedral, February 18, 1906.

bodies accept as the text-book of religion; and let the State give to all its children in all its schools simple Bible teaching." With the general aim of such a suggestion we must all of us be in the most cordial sympathy. It is of incalculable importance that every one of our children should know his Bible. If we were asked—What is, perhaps, the greatest influence that has kept the public and private life of our nation true to God and to its best ideals? we should most of us, and with justice, reply, "The Bible." The other day I saw the Bible—the volume which had been the chosen companion through all his life—of one who has done great service to his country and his Church. There in that volume, one felt as one looked upon it—marked, as it was, by the impress of every stage in the man's history—there was the power, the friendship, which had sustained him in sorrow, uplifted him in joy, strengthened him in temptation, inspired him to labour. Similarly, all through the story of our English nation—since, at least, it first accepted its great destiny—the Bible has been the friend and companion of the people. It carries with it into the most distant parts of the globe the most sacred memories of home, so that in his Bible the traveller in the far seas feels that he is one with his parents in the cottage among the hills of the Highlands. The Bible by a thousand of the earliest and tenderest associations has woven a chain that binds every class in English life to the one Father. In the midst of all divisions it is, at least, the court of appeal to which every religious Christian body turns. And, above all, whatever name we may apply to ourselves, it has given to us the mother-tongue of our religion, which reminds us that, after all, in spite of divisions, we have a real spiritual kinship in the family of God.

But what is the secret of this marvellous power of the Bible over our hearts and consciences? It is that, somehow, we feel that God Himself speaks to our souls through the words of the Bible. It is that these are sacred writings which make men "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." As a library of literature the Bible is, indeed, incomparable. Where shall we find poetry of such spiritual intensity as we find in the Psalms, where such matchless pathos and simplicity as in the Bible stories, where such kindling passion as in

the words of the prophets ? As a record of history it is, indeed, an impressive sketch of the development of national life and destiny. But it is not as literature or as history that it has found its way into our heart and life. Let me use the words once spoken in this place by Dr. Liddon : “ Not in the literary or the historical features of the Bible, but in the great truths which it reveals about God, about our Incarnate Lord, about man, in the great examples it holds forth of patience and of victory, in the great promises which it repeats, in the future which it unfolds to the eye of faith, is its treasure to be found.”

The power of the Bible in our lives is due to the fact that from the very first, from the earliest teaching of our parents, we have been under the guidance of this eye of faith. Place the Bible, in itself, as a library of books, in the hands of a child, without explanation, without guidance, and ask him, as Philip asked the Ethiopian on the road to Gaza, “ Understandest thou what thou readest ? ” Would he not answer, if he could frame his answer in words, “ How can I except some man shall guide me ? ” It is the guidance of faith that has made the Bible what it is, not its mere text or history ; and the Bible has been a power in our English life, because through all these centuries, even before our English State was founded, it was surrounded, protected, and interpreted by the faith of the Christian Church.

You will, therefore, see that the value of Bible teaching depends upon the teacher. And, if this be so, there are two qualities we must expect and require of those who teach it. The first is the quality of reverence. The teacher must impress the child with the conviction that when he comes to the Bible lesson he is entering holy ground. The words, the method, the very manner of the teacher, must suggest to the child the humility which is due to a sacred Presence. To teach, even to read, the Bible in a tone of flippancy, carelessness, or indifference, is not only to teach badly ; it is to give the child from the very first an entirely wrong conception of the place which the Bible holds among the books of the world.

Secondly, we must expect in the teacher the quality of faith. The presence or absence of some faith in the message which the Bible brings is involved in every act of teaching. The way in which the teacher reads the Bible

or allows it to be read, the very selections which he makes of the passages which are to be studied, the explanations which he gives, in themselves, and in the very tone in which they are given, reveal inevitably to the quick insight of the child whether or not the teacher speaks from a heart of faith or a heart of indifference, or unbelief. Whatever faith a man has must communicate itself to his pupils through the teaching of the Bible. And we Christians cannot be content merely that a man should give the best faith that he has ; we must ask for our children that the faith he gives is that faith which is the very essence of the meaning of the Holy Scriptures—faith in Christ Jesus, the Supreme Personality, God and Man. He is the Light which illuminates and gives value to every portion of the Bible. It is in Him that its history culminates ; it is towards Him that its prophecies point ; it is of Him that the Apostles speak and write ; and, therefore, to teach the Bible from any other point of view than faith in the supremacy of the revelation given in Christ Jesus is to give a wrong conception of its whole meaning and character. Nay, may we not go further and say that it is to give a wrong conception of the character of our Christian religion ?

For we have to remember that after all our religion does not consist in belief in a book, however sacred. It consists in belief in and union with a living Person, Jesus Christ, and, therefore, if we are to teach the Bible we must teach in it that Word of God on which alone we place our trust—the Word which was “made Flesh, and dwelt among us.” Faith in the Person of Jesus, Divine and human, is the very starting-point of Bible-teaching. Doubtless it is the place of the scholar in after years, by careful analysis, by the study of history, and by the process of reasoning to examine and test how far the Scriptures lead to belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ. But, for the child, the order of ideas must be, “Believe, in order that you may understand.” We do not wish to give our children, primarily, materials which will help them to a critical study of the Scriptures, but the inspiration which will help them to live “a godly, righteous, and sober life.” Therefore it is that if the Scriptures are to make our children “wise unto salvation,” it must be “through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”



And after all we find that this is the method of the greatest teachers, the Apostolic writers themselves. We often forget that no part of the New Testament was written in order to give the first instruction in Christianity. Every book of the New Testament was addressed to men who were already members of a Christian body. For sixty or seventy years before the New Testament, as we have it, was placed in the hands of the Church, men had been educated and trained in the faith that God had revealed Himself in Christ; that God was present in His Spirit; that there was a special meaning in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus; that there were Christian Sacraments binding on all members of the body; that there were specially Christian moral duties; that there was a judgment awaiting and a life to come. It was on the basis of that teaching that the Apostolic writings were committed to the Christian Church. The Apostolic method was to teach the Faith and give the Bible to prove it, not to teach the Bible and leave the Faith to be inferred from it. They taught the early Christians—as members of a body, if you will, of a denomination—through its own commissioned teachers according to the Faith which held it together. Thus we are only asserting the Apostolic principle of teaching when we say that the value of Bible teaching to our children depends upon the personal faith and sincerity of the teacher, and that the Faith must be “in Jesus Christ” as the supreme revelation of God.

You will assent then, surely, to these statements: But consider them for a moment, in their bearing on present problems. Consider again, as we did briefly last Sunday, the probability that the State for its own reasons, controlling all the schools of the country, may refrain from requiring any test of personal faith or sincerity from its teachers. That is no abstract supposition: If there is anything certain about the future, it is that no such test will be required of those who are appointed teachers by the State. As I said last week, we may accept that decision as a principle of civil policy. The teachers are a branch of the Civil Service. Why should they be exposed to tests from which all other branches of the Civil Service have been set free? But, though this may be a perfectly just principle of civil government, it only reveals, surely, with impressive clearness, that the State cannot undertake the

task of teaching religion: This is a matter that goes to the root principle of Bible-teaching. Do not suppose that to say this is to betray some sort of sacerdotal suspiciousness. Let me read to you the words of two great Nonconformists: Dr. Dale says: "Unless our Lord is spoken of with the reverence, awe, and wonder which His divinity ought to inspire, then to talk to children about His earthly history must discourage faith rather than contribute to it." Or, one who is still alive, a venerable figure, Dr. Guinness Rogers: "How is it possible to teach such teaching while we have no guarantee for the religious views of the teacher? and how can we have that without any religious test?" I know full well that you may reply—and none of you can feel the force of the reply more than I do—that you cannot, by merely appointing teachers from a denomination, secure that they shall all be persons of sincerity, and that you can certainly trust large numbers of our teachers, however tested, to give the best of a real and honest Christian faith for the helping of their children. That is true, but surely there is all the difference in the world between a system which is bound by honour to take every precaution to secure the personal sincerity of the teacher and a system which is equally bound to take none; between a system under which this personal sincerity and faith of the teacher is fundamental and a system under which it is necessarily indifferent. And it is, remember, with principles that we are concerned. It is one thing to make the best of any system, however imperfect, if it cannot be avoided, and another thing to acquiesce in it, much more to claim or to welcome it as the basis upon which a Bible-loving people are to base the Bible-teaching of their children.

Shall we, then, follow the bidding of some who feel the force of these contentions and say, "Then, let us at least unite upon what is surely fundamental not only to religious bodies, but to every honest man—the plain moral teaching of the Bible. This at least needs no religious tests. Let the State teach the Bible morality, and use the Bible as its text-book"? Certain it is that in the Bible there is unfolded, from the Decalogue to the Sermon on the Mount, a moral appeal which does touch the hearts and consciences of men who study it. But is this uplifting of a moral standard the real heart of the



Gospel and of its message? There are other moral systems which come very near the Christian system, but what makes the Christian system unique and unapproachable by any other is this—that it gives to man a master-motive for following the ideal and a master-power for realising it. What is the master-motive? It is twofold: It is that man, on the one side, sees in the Cross of Jesus Christ the measure and the reality of sin, and, on the other side, the unspeakable love and generosity which have come down to take away that sin, by offering an all-sufficient sacrifice for it, so that afterwards a man's whole moral motive is this: "The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if One died for all then were all dead, and that He died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again." That is the master-passion of Christian morality. And what is the master-power? It is that Jesus Christ is not only our example, for then, surely, it would be unattainable, but that He is a Living Spirit who communicates from His own life the life and the power by which that example can be followed. Strip the New Testament of that master-passion and of that master-power, and the morality that remains, impressive as it is, is not the morality which has fired the Christian saint and transformed the conscience of the world. No, my brethren, if we are to teach Christian morality it also must be taught by those who themselves believe in the Christian faith.

Lastly, driven by the pressure of these difficulties, shall we take our stand on this position—that in all our schools the text of the Bible should be simply read or repeated without comment? It is worth while to note in passing that this process of thought may not improbably prove to be a process of fact, and that "simple Bible teaching" may, in order to avoid all difficulties, become mere Bible reading. Now, let us admit that even some knowledge of the Bible text may be of great value. But its value depends on the explanations which accompany or follow it. From the standpoint of education, nothing could be more barren and futile than such mechanical reading or repetition unless it is accompanied by an appeal to the child's own intelligence. From the standpoint of religion, the value of a mere knowledge of the Bible words depends even more upon the religious atmosphere in which

the child's own life is lived. In an atmosphere of reverent faith the Bible words may indeed be vitalised, and fruitfully enter the child's heart and mind. But is this the atmosphere into which many of our children pass? And, remember, it is for the sake of children whose parents make no special profession of religion that the necessity of some State Bible-teaching is specially urged. The atmosphere into which too many of the children pass, at least in our great towns, is one in which the sacredness of the Bible is denied, and its phrases ridiculed and perverted. You have only to read the recent articles in the *Clarion* newspaper to see how a knowledge of the Bible text can be used to attack and to travesty the Christian faith. Is it, then, an exaggeration to say that mere "simple Bible teaching" may possibly come to hinder the very cause which it set out to help?

We reach, then, the same conclusion which we reached last Sunday afternoon—namely, this, that it is not possible for the State, with any justice to the cause which it undertakes, to teach religion in its schools. But it is a Christian State, the State of a nation which believes in and loves its Bible. Therefore, let it not banish the Bible from its schools. God forbid! Rather let it turn to the Christian Church, to the religious denominations, and ask them to teach the Bible to its children on its behalf and within its schools with that full-hearted sincerity and zeal which they and they only can command. Do not for a moment suppose that "denominational teaching" is not Bible teaching. We want the Bible taught: the Bible will always be the basis of instruction. But we want it taught under the conditions which alone can commend it to the intelligence and the conscience of the children. To claim this, therefore, you will see, is not to disparage the Bible, but only to ask that the Bible shall have a chance of being in the future the living power which it has been in the past:

Our plea is for the honour of the Bible. This nation seems to be specially entrusted by the providence of God with the care of the Bible: At its very start, in the early days which seem so far remote, its typical King, Alfred, laid the foundations of its life by giving it, with the one hand, its body of laws, and with the other hand a translation of the Bible text; and still, at the beginning of the twentieth century, when at the Coronation our nation renewed its

covenant with God through its representative the King, the Archbishop representing the Church, the guardian and keeper of Holy Writ, placed the Bible in the hands of the King with these words: "Our gracious King, we present you with this book, the most valuable thing that the world affords. Here is wisdom. Here is the Royal law. Here are the lively oracles of God." Let us be jealous with a great jealousy for this trust of the honour of our Bible which has been placed in our hands. We can only be faithful to the trust if we see to it that in the teaching of our schools the children learn to regard their Bibles as "sacred writings which are able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

III.—UNDENOMINATIONAL TEACHING.<sup>1</sup>

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.—EPHESIANS ii. 19.

WE have been endeavouring to rise beyond the region of prejudice and misunderstanding into the region of principle, in regard to the vexed question of the religious education of our children. At every point in our quest we have been confronted by a principle—plausible, specious, and popular. To-day it presents itself in its most characteristic guise, in the shape which has specially earned for it its cumbrous title, the principle of Undenominationalism. Let us listen to it as once again it presents its plea.

“The religion,” it says, “which ought to be taught to our children is that which is common to all denominations; accordingly, it must not use any formulary which is distinctive of any particular body, and it must not be taught so as to attach the children to any particular denomination. The State, which represents every form of religious opinion, can, therefore, make use of this sort of teaching safely and profitably in all its schools.” Now, brethren, let us at once, plainly and simply, join issue with this specious plea, and reply that it is wrong from the standpoint both of education and of religion.

First of all, it is wrong from the standpoint of education. We are learning by experience that the real problem of all education is not so much what is to be taught in the schools, as how that teaching is to be related to the actual life of the child. The test of success in teaching is measured by its continuity in the life of the child. The environment on which that success depends is not the artificial

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's Cathedral, February 25, 1906.

environment of the school itself, but the real and actual environment of the life into which the child passes when school-hours are over and school-days are done. The question, therefore, which presents itself always to the mind of the wise teacher is, How can my teaching be continued in the child's home and after-life?

First, in the home. It is of the utmost importance that the home—the most lasting influence in the child's life—should be enlisted on the side of what the child is taught. Thus, in regard to religious teaching, it is vital to its success and its permanence that it should correspond with whatever is best in the religious life and interests of the home. I need not tell you that in the home religion expresses itself, not in theory, but in practice, in the religious habits which bind the household together. The religious teaching which the child receives in school ought, therefore, to be in correspondence with the religious habits of the household to which it belongs. But it is just in the region of religious habits that denominations are marked off the one from the other. The religious teaching, therefore, in the schools, if it is to become a part of the real life of the child, must be precisely, not independent of, but in accordance with, the denomination to which its parents belong. For example, a child observes at home that the parents are anxious about the Baptism and the Confirmation of their children—that they themselves make an example of attending church on Sundays, and, it may be, of receiving the Holy Communion—what will be the effect upon the child's mind if during the week it comes in contact, under the powerful influences of the teacher, with a system of religious teaching in which these practices are either not mentioned at all or mentioned necessarily without any enthusiasm or conviction? The result must be that to the child's mind either the teaching in the school or the practice in the home is unreal.

But secondly, and even more important, education must concern itself with the life of the child when school-days are over. We are learning, by a somewhat painful experience, that, unless we can develop the continuation schools of the country, much of all the care and expense devoted to its elementary education are wasted. This is even more true of religious teaching. What must be the effect in

the after-life of the child of the collection of stories, texts, and maxims which it has learned in school if these are, as it were, left suspended somewhere in the air—unless they are embodied and fulfilled in the life and practice of some religious community? The Church is the great continuation school, indispensable to the elementary education of religion. It is there that the best impressions of school-teaching should at once and naturally be deepened and vitalised. The teaching of the school will lose half its value unless from first to last it is a preparation for the life of the Church. The Germans, the masters of educational method, are in this respect, as in so many others, wiser than we are. The State in Germany expressly declares that the object of all the religious teaching in its schools should be to lead the child to identify itself with the life of some religious body. Therefore, we are only following true educational principles when we assert that the special aim of religious education in the schools should be to attach the child to some particular denomination.

But now, in the second place, let us rise to a higher ground. We maintain that the undenominational principle is wrong, from the standpoint not only of education, but also of religion—nay, that it not only fails to interpret, but it reverses, the method of Christ Himself, the Divine Teacher. Was it His method to lay down certain truths and maxims and to leave individuals to make of them what they pleased, and afterwards, according to their own taste and temperament, to join themselves with others who shared their opinions? We know that to the ordinary crowd of persons who listened to the teaching of Jesus He could not commit that deeper truth which was to be the salvation of the world. Before He could find an entry for that truth He must prepare a body in which it could live and act upon the world, and be preserved through all the fluctuating generations of men.

Let me quote to you some words of a sermon preached from this pulpit by Canon Holland—one of those sermons, alas! too few, of which, I think, it can be said that it constituted an epoch in the religious thinking of many who heard or read it: “How can Jesus build on the loose and shifting rubble, on the blind movement of the crowd, so vague, so indetermined?” Is that not, I pause to ask, the very description of the undenominational spirit?



“To build on this is to build on the sand, and He has to build for eternity. Where, then, can He find building ground? Not in them that bring Him but sand, but in those Twelve selected, prepared, set apart from the crowd, led off with Him in lonely places, men who can be trained at last to understand His secret, to apprehend His life-work, to name His Name.” To the preparation of these men—of that Body—Jesus devoted Himself with ever-deepening concentration; it was they whom He gathered round about Him. It was to them that He looked for the continuation of His work upon earth; they were to go forth from Him as He had come forth from the Father. Upon them, this chosen and prepared body, the recipient of all His teaching, there came the Spirit of Truth, so that the body of the selected friends became the Body of the Risen Christ, in which He Himself, by His Spirit, still lived and acted upon the world. He came, indeed, preaching the kingdom of heaven, but the kingdom was to be manifested before men, and realised through the activities of a Divine society filled with His Spirit, and charged with His message to the world.

Was that society to be something vague, invisible, unsubstantial? Let me give the answer in the words of a writer of no ecclesiastical bias, but one who studied the Gospel story with candid eyes—the late Professor Seeley. “It was no unsubstantial city such as we fancy in the clouds, no invisible pattern such as Plato thought might be laid up in heaven, but a visible corporation whose members met together to eat bread and wine, and into which they were initiated by immersion in water.” The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ was a compact body of men holding together in the midst of the world, and visible to the eyes of all; and it was through membership in this body that men were to realise the great gifts of union with Himself, and fellowship with one another. There they were to be united to Him so that together they could share the merits of His atoning death, receive together the grace of His redeeming life, and work together in the one fellowship for the salvation of the world.

That great conception—that the Christian life can only be realised in fellowship—is the basis of all Apostolic teaching. From the isolation of merely individual life and opinion, from all the sundering forces of human distinc-

tions of class and creed, men were to be gathered together into the one fellowship, regenerated by its life, fed by its holy food. They were to be no longer "aliens and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Thus it would be true to say that the very object of Christ's teaching of religion—nay, of His very mission from the Father—was to attach men to a body. May we not even dare to say—you will not misunderstand the words—that Christ came to make man a Church man?

Why is it that we find it so hard here in England to realise in our experience this essential truth of the Gospel? It is partly because of our national temperament—so dull to all ideas which make demands upon thought and imagination. But it is also partly due to the circumstances of our national and our religious history. We have exaggerated and misinterpreted the great Protestant conception that a man's religion is a matter of individual relationship between him and God. In the same way we have exaggerated and misinterpreted our great heritage of individual freedom, so that an Englishman comes almost to think that the State exists for the purpose of advancing his interests, protecting his commerce, and extending his resources. Thank God, we are beginning to outgrow the tendencies of this spirit. We are realising, and trying to teach in our schools, that a man's life is bound up with his nation, that as he shares its blood, so he must not grudge the demands for sacrifice which it makes upon him. We have all been thrilled by the example of a new nation—the people of Japan. We all saw with our own eyes, at the time of our great war, how the most ordinary, even the most unsatisfactory, character could be enriched and transformed by the kindling touch of the spirit of patriotism. We are beginning to learn, and to teach in our schools, that a man's life cannot be fulfilled if it only follows its own interests, but that it must fulfil itself by seeking the good and bearing the burdens of the community to which he belongs. And it may be that we are only beginning to see the ideals which that conception will open out to another stage of English history, perhaps only beginning to face the sacrifices which it may call upon us to make.

Now, does religion stand apart from this great principle, that life can only be realised in fellowship? Nay, rather



in religion—in the Christian religion—it is raised to its highest form and to its greatest power, so that we may say that the brotherhood of men with one another in the Church—with one another and with Christ—is to become more and more, in a sense which it has not been in the past, a light set before the eyes of men from which, in the whole sphere of national and common life, they may learn what brotherhood and fellowship mean. Is this, then, the time in which we can establish the religious education of our children on a principle which entirely neglects and passes over this great conception of the Christian life—which teaches that religion is an affair of man's own opinion, and that fellowship with Christ with other Christian men in the life of the body is only a matter of subsequent taste and temperament? Rather must we teach our children from the very first that they are related to God and to one another because they are members of a great body knit together in a living fellowship—"fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

Would God, indeed, that that conception could be realised through the life of one single all-embracing Church. So it was meant to be by the Lord Jesus, Who purchased His Church with His own Blood; but, alas! as it has passed down the ages the Church has been torn into many fragments, and the vision of one single Christian body is no longer what it was meant to be, a living fact, but only a distant hope. But is the principle itself in abeyance? Has it been withdrawn? Are we to take out great passages of the teaching of the New Testament? Has the principle been suspended until these distant hopes can be fulfilled? Nay, rather we are still called to act upon the principle that our Christian life is impossible without the reality of Christian fellowship. And, if we cannot realise that conception through one single Church, we have to face the facts as we find them, and realise it by identifying ourselves heart and soul with the Christian denominations to which we belong. That is why we can say with full sincerity, in order that a man may realise the principle of Christian fellowship, if he be an Anglican, let him be a whole-hearted and enthusiastic Anglican; if he be a Roman Catholic, let him be a whole-hearted and enthusiastic Roman Catholic; if he be a Baptist, let him be a whole-hearted and en-

thusiastic Baptist. Let him, indeed, keep the ideal of the one Church before his thoughts and prayers; let the spirit of charity guide his words and acts; but let him witness to the fellowship of the Body in the active life of his own community. What we submit is—and surely there can be little doubt of it—that the undenominational man, the man who stands apart either in superiority or in indifference from any form of Christian fellowship, presents a meagre and maimed Christianity which finds no reflection in the pages of the New Testament. Is this the type towards which we are to educate the religious life of our children?

Nay, we see only too widespread the success which has already followed this kind of education. When we think of the undenominational teaching given in many of our great public schools we understand why it is that so many of our educated classes are so selfish and self-centred in religion. They have never been taught that loyalty to their school ought to have passed on to loyalty to an older, richer, and greater society, the Church, in which they were born and baptized. We realise the effect of undenominational teaching in our elementary schools when we read in Mr. Booth's analysis of the religious life of London that, practically speaking, the working classes stand apart from any form of organised religion. Their religion is vague—a sentiment, a feeling, and, therefore, without strength either to resist temptation or to give witness.

This evening I hope, please God, to speak to some two or three thousands of our poorest East-enders at the conclusion of our great Mission in Whitechapel. They are gathered in from that great mass of indifference, and it will be my privilege to speak to them of the everlasting Gospel of the love of God in Jesus Christ. But when any man sees these multitudes of people, wandering as sheep without a shepherd, must he not feel that he does not deliver the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ unless he strains every nerve to plead with them to come within some Christian fold, to be protected and trained and fed by the living Lord, Who dwells in its midst?

Let me say frankly that on this subject I can speak from experience. I have been the undenominational man. I know the attractions of its convenience, of its plausible liberalism,

of its specious charity. But, thank God, I have come to know also how powerless it is to vitalise the religious aspirations of a man's soul or to strengthen his will. And when once into the life of the Christian there has come the vision of that great fellowship descending from our Lord Himself through all the ages and binding men together into one communion with Himself and with the saints, then ever afterwards one of his heart-words must be, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." We cannot be "disobedient to the heavenly vision;" and therefore we cannot, without disloyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ and to His own method of teaching, come to any other conclusion than this—that the object of the religious teaching of our children in the schools must be to attach them to a religious denomination. Thus we reach the same result to which by two other lines of thought we have been already brought. If the State desires for its children a religious education efficient in itself and permanent in its effects, it must turn to the religious denominations to supply it. The State will prove the earnestness of its desire by the opportunities and encouragements which it gives to the denominations to teach religion within all its schools.

We have, then, reached the end of our inquiry. I thank you for the patience and attention with which you have followed me. I pray God that no word may have been spoken inconsistent with that charity which is specially laid upon us on this Quinquagesima Sunday. We are in prospect of a settlement of this vexed question of religious education. We find ourselves standing at the parting of the ways, beckoned on either hand by two rival principles. It is the duty of every thoughtful man of religion to make his choice. There are difficulties both ways, but if we follow the one principle we find ourselves inevitably becoming more and more entangled, wandering farther and farther from all that is really strong and vital in religion. If we follow the other we shall find ourselves making our way through the difficulties by the guidance of a clear and consistent principle which has truth upon its side. We are still in the region of principle; we have not yet come to the stage in which we have to criticise any actual measure; and, therefore, it is of the first importance that while still in that region of principle we

should assert what we believe with a clear and undisguised emphasis.

I close, therefore, by asking you once more this question—I ask it not, I think, as a member of any one Church, but simply as a man who wishes his fellow-men to be vitally Christian—Can we at this critical moment choose as the national principle of religious education one which will inevitably by its influence detach our children still further from the life and energy of Christian fellowship, which may involve such consequences as these—that the Bible is presented to them as a mere collection of texts rather than as the living Word in which, when it is interpreted by faith, the living Spirit still speaks to the souls of men; or that it may depend upon the vote of a County Council whether or not the Apostles' Creed is to be regarded as fundamental to Christianity within its area? Is this the salt which is to permeate the world with the strength of Christian principles—this salt which is continually losing the savour of definite conviction? Is this the light set on high to guide the English people to Jesus Christ—this light which is kindled and sustained by no whole-hearted faith? Is this the city set upon a hill in which men are to fulfil their true life in fellowship with Christ and one another—this city which is built upon no fixed foundations and guarded by no walls of definite belief? Is this to be our defence against secularism—this principle which, following its own chosen line of least resistance, must tend itself to become secularism of the most dangerous sort, secularism disguised as a form of religion? I ask the question, and I leave it to your reason and conscience to find the answer. We appeal to the bishops, the clergy, and the people of the Church of England to prove to the eyes of succeeding generations that at this moment of opportunity the Church of England was found wanting neither in the courage of its convictions nor in loyalty to the truth committed to its charge.



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